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APPROACH TO LANGUAGES IN THE CROATIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM

Diploma paper

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Abstract

The aim of this paper was to examine the approach to languages in the Croatian education system (language teaching in primary and secondary schools) in order to find out to what extent Croatian language policies described in national documents comply with objectives and standards of the European Union presented in many official documents by the Council of Europe, such as *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR), *The Framework of Reference for Pluralistic Approaches to Languages and Cultures* (FREPA) or *Guide for the Development and Implementation of Curricula for Plurilingual and Intercultural Education*, and how far we are from creating a society of plurilingual and pluricultural individuals, which multilingual and multicultural European Union aspires to. We were also interested in tracing the evidence of positive attitudes and skills which should aid the development of plurilingual and pluricultural competence in the chapter *Language and communication area* in the National curriculum (Ministarstvo znanosti, obrazovanja i športa, 2010, pp. 30-79). It was discovered that not many skills and resources in the National curriculum comply with those in the FREPA, and a bigger number of those that do is not connected with language (plurilingualism), but with culture (pluriculturalism). It was also discovered that the number of languages taught in Croatian primary and secondary schools as a part of obligatory programme does not correspond with the objectives of the European Union that every citizen should be able to use at least two foreign languages in addition to their mother tongue, i.e. every student in Croatia is not given a chance to learn at least two foreign languages in the course of their obligatory education, so they would be able to use them as adults.

Key words: plurilingualism, pluriculturalism, curriculum

1. Introduction

Living in a modern European society implies being surrounded with people of different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Throughout their lifetime, European citizens will find themselves in contact with at least some of the 23 official languages of the European Union, even if they never leave their home town. Also, one may choose to travel abroad with the goal to find a better job, to develop their business or simply for pleasure. Whatever it may be, finding yourself in a foreign country implies interacting and communicating with its citizens, which furthermore implies using one or more foreign languages. Even though the mobility of Croatian citizens has been increased since July 2013 when Croatia became the Member State of the European Union, the question is whether Croatian citizens have been equipped with skills and competences necessary to participate in the multilingual and multicultural society of the European Union.

2. Plurilingual individuals in a multilingual society

For centuries, Europe has been more or less multilingual and multicultural, as it is the case with any society in the world. This rich linguistic and cultural diversity is a consequence of different social and political events throughout history, such as territorial conquests, migrations, different political and religious unions etc. In addition to this inherited multilingualism, “contemporary societies are exposed to greater linguistic diversity because of increased economic and professional mobility” (Cavalli, Coste, Crisan & van de Ven, 2009, p. 4). Thus, unity of Europe, as a society and as a political union, depends to a great extent on the success in preserving linguistic diversity and multilingualism. Knowing multiple languages is crucial for mutual understanding and communication but also for the protection of the cultural diversity of Europe.

As it is stated in the Article 22 of the *Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union* (2000) and in the Article 3 of the *Treaty on European Union* (2012), cultural and linguistic diversity, and cultural heritage are to be respected and safeguarded. This leads to the conclusion that multilingualism and plurilingualism are not just present in the European Union, but are, in fact, the norm. This view is furthermore supported by the *White Paper on Education and Training*

(1995) in which it is stated that the “European Commission believes that it is necessary to make proficiency in at least two foreign languages at school a priority” (p. 13). According to the survey titled *Europeans and their languages*, carried out by TNS Opinion & Social network in 2012, 72% of Europeans agree with this long-term EU objective, even though only a quarter of them have achieved it. However, there are eight Member States in which the majority of citizens have practical skills in at least two foreign languages. In the first place is Luxembourg with 84% of citizens with such skills, which is understandable considering the fact that they are educated in three official languages (Luxembourgish, German and French) and many learn at least one additional foreign language in the course of their education. (Hoffmann, 1998, p. 155) Luxembourg is followed by the Netherlands (77%), Slovenia (67%), Malta (59%), Denmark (58%), Latvia (54%) and Lithuania and Estonia (52%). The data for Croatia are not given because it was not included in the survey. According to the same survey, only one in ten Europeans is conversant in at least three languages. However, it is also stated that more than half of Europeans (54%) are able to communicate in at least one additional language other than their mother tongue, meaning that more than half of Europe is bilingual.

3. “Pluri”, “multi” and “inter”

Before discussing the benefits of knowing and learning multiple languages, some key terms must be defined in order to fully comprehend the issues tackled in the study. What is the meaning hidden under the terms plurilingual and pluricultural? Is it the same as multilingual and multicultural? Since knowing and learning foreign languages has been highly emphasized lately, these terms have been well defined and distinguished in several papers and official documents.

In the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR), the Council of Europe makes a clear distinction between multilingualism and plurilingualism. Multilingualism is “the knowledge of a number of languages, or the co-existence of different languages in a given society”, while the concept of plurilingualism emphasizes the expanding of “an individual person’s experience of language in its cultural context” (Council of Europe, 2007, p. 4). To further define those concepts, two phrases should be juxtaposed and emphasized here: *a number of languages*

versus *the experience of language*. Multilingualism views languages as objects which are clearly distinguishable from one another, which means that a multilingual individual possesses distinct linguistic competences in multiple languages and is “able to use several languages especially with equal fluency” (Merriam-Webster). In contrast, as Beacco and Byram (2007) have said, plurilingualism views languages from the point of view of the speakers and it denotes the repertoire of different languages. According to Cavalli et al. (2009), plurilingual competence “is a unitary concept when seen in terms of it being the competence to manage plural language resources and capacities of the plurilingual repertoire” (p. 7). Plurilingual person possesses plurilingual and pluricultural competence, which is “the ability to use languages for the purposes of communication and to take part in intercultural interaction, where a person, viewed as a social agent has proficiency, of varying degrees, in several languages” (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 168). As Coste, Moore and Zarate (2009) state, plurilingual and pluricultural competence is unbalanced because “general proficiency may vary according to the language” and “the profile of language ability may be different from one language to another” (p. 11). For example, plurilingual individual may have excellent listening skills in two languages, but good oral ability in only one of them, and satisfactory writing and reading skills in a third one. They may not necessarily *know* i.e., have native-like competences in more than one language, but they are skilful at picking up what they need in a particular situation and at applying foreign language learning and using strategies, because they know enough about how languages function. They can recognize words between the strange print in the store, pick out those sounds which refer to their bus stop, or throw together key words to ask for direction or express their needs.

It could also be said that plurilingualism is purely individual. In a multilingual society, several languages are present and used, but that certainly does not mean that every member of that society is able to use all of them. They may not even be able to use more than one, which means that members of a multilingual society can be monolingual (able to use only one language, usually their mother tongue), bilingual (able to use two languages) and plurilingual (able to use more than two languages).

According to Moore (2006), plurilingualism is a contextual phenomenon, which means that plurilingual competence comes alive when a person finds themselves in particular situations which entail several different linguistic and cultural contexts, such as conversations with foreign language

speaking people, using the media, and travelling abroad. Thus, according to the CEFR, plurilingualism must “be seen in the context of pluriculturalism” because “language is not only a major aspect of culture, but also a means of access to cultural manifestations” (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 6). That is the reason why in the CEFR plurilingual and pluricultural competence are considered to be a single concept which is “not seen as the superposition or juxtaposition of distinct competences, but rather as the existence of a complex or even composite competence on which the user may draw” (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 168). However, pluricultural competence is not limited only to people in possession of plurilingual competence, same as plurilingual competence does not presuppose the possession of pluricultural competence since “the pluricultural profile may differ from the plurilingual profile” (Coste, Moore & Zarate, 2009, p. 11). An individual may be very familiar with a particular culture without knowing a single word of the language(s) spoken within that culture, same as they can master the foreign language, but still not be familiar with the culture(s) of people speaking it. However, since language is a major aspect of culture, pluricultural competence is best developed through plurilingualism.

Byram (2009) defines pluriculturalism as the ability to identify “with at least some of the values, beliefs and/or practices of two and more cultures” and to acquire “the competences which are necessary for actively participating in those cultures” (p. 6). He further defines pluricultural individuals as “people with the competences of knowledge, disposition and linguistic and behavioural skills required to function as a social actor within two or more cultures” (p. 6). Although identification with and participation in a fairly similar culture is almost effortless, identifying with a distant and completely different culture and taking part in it may not be so easy. For example, citizen of Croatia might easily identify with and adapt to any Western culture, but may have difficulties in doing so with distant cultures such as Japanese or Chinese. Since the respect of cultural diversity and heritage is one of the main principles of the European Union, the Council of Europe highly values and promotes intercultural awareness which is produced by “knowledge, awareness and understanding of the relation (similarities and distinctive differences) between the ‘world of origin’ and the ‘world of the target community’” (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 103). The most concise and comprehensive definition of intercultural competence was given by Beacco and Byram (2007) who state that intercultural competence is

a combination of knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours which allow a speaker, to varying degrees, to recognise, understand, interpret and accept other ways of living and thinking beyond his or her home culture. This competence is the basis of understanding among people, and is not limited to language ability (p. 114).

Mastering intercultural skills, such as the ability to correlate one's own culture with a foreign one, cultural sensitivity, the ability to act as a cultural intermediary between two cultures or the skill of overcoming stereotypes, forms intercultural competence which is crucial for the mutual understanding between the citizens of the European Union and the world.

4. Benefits of plurilingualism

Knowing more than one language has numerous benefits, as it is outlined in the article *Positively Plurilingual* published by the National Centre for Languages of the United Kingdom. Those benefits range from linguistic (plurilinguals find it easier to learn new languages than monolinguals, among other things, because they are able to see their common features), educational (plurilingual students can gain knowledge from sources in different languages and outperform monolinguals in tests), intellectual (plurilinguals are better at multitasking and reading and have higher levels of creativity), cultural (plurilingualism allows access to cultural manifestations of different societies and aids in development of intercultural competence), to economic (plurilinguals have better job and mobility opportunities) (pp. 4-5). Other than aforementioned advantages of plurilingualism, it has been discovered that knowing more than one language has positive effects on mental health too: it wards off the symptoms of dementia and Alzheimer's disease (Bialystok, Craik & Freedman, 2007; Albán-González & Ortega-Campoverde, 2014). Taking into account all the above, it is certain that learning multiple languages and plurilingual education should be one of the main objectives of every governmental body in charge of developing educational policies.

5. Plurilingual education and pluralistic approaches

Beacco and Byram (2007) differentiate between the terms plurilingual education and education for plurilingualism. For the former one, it can be said that it is strictly connected to the language teaching and learning and its “purpose is to develop plurilingualism as a competence” (p. 18). In contrast, plurilingual education refers to “all activities, curricular or extra-curricular, of whatever nature” and can “be achieved through activities designed (...) to raise awareness of linguistic diversity, but which do not aim to teach such languages” (p. 18).

Since language and culture, as well as plurilingualism and pluriculturalism, are intertwined, it is only natural that plurilingual and pluricultural education are also closely connected. According to Beacco and Byram (2007) pluricultural education refers to “activities, whether carried out as a form of teaching or otherwise, which aim to raise awareness and positive acceptance of cultural, religious and linguistic differences, and the capacity to interact and build relationships with others” (p. 18).

In order to make such education possible, and in order to achieve plurilingual and pluricultural competence, shift had to be made from singular approaches, “in which the didactic approach takes account of only one language or a particular culture, considered in isolation” (Candelier et al., 2010, p. 8), to pluralistic approaches to languages and culture “which use teaching / learning activities involving several (...) varieties of languages and cultures” (ibid.). In the last three decades, four such approaches have arisen:

- *intercultural approach*, which has already had significant influence on language teaching methodology and is “based on didactic principles which recommend relying on phenomena from one or more cultural area(s) (...) as a basis for understanding others”¹. For example, this approach can be divided into three stages in a foreign language learning situation (e.g., EFL classroom). In stage one the focus is on the students' own culture, not as something which comes naturally and is taken for granted, but from an objective point of view, as one of the many world cultures and a part of the world's cultural heritage. The aim of the second stage is to acquaint students with target language speaking cultures (e.g., English-speaking cultures: British, American, Australian, Indian etc.) and develop their ability to compare

¹ <http://carap.ecml.at/Keyconcepts/tabid/2681/language/en-US/Default.aspx>

them with their own culture, and find similarities and differences. In the third and final stage students expand their cultural knowledge by learning about all cultures of the world (e.g., Chinese, Mexican, Russian, African etc.) (Chlopek, 2008).

- *awakening to languages (l'éveil aux langues)* was intended for schoolchildren as an introduction to linguistic diversity. In this approach “some of the learning activities are concerned with languages which it is not the mission of the school to teach” (Candelier et al., 2010. p. 9). It is the most extreme of the four, because there is no limit on the number of languages dealt with. Children can be presented with over 20 languages at the same time. An example of classroom activity using this approach would be the following: students are presented with a well-known tale of Little Red Riding Hood and are also given the title of the tale in different languages. Through the activity they discover that word to word translation between languages is not possible, and that all languages present identifiable ways of linking form and meaning. They also observe how a wide known tale is embedded in different cultural and linguistic contexts.
- *intercomprehension of related languages*, where several languages of the same linguistic family are studied at the same time (for example, Slavic, Germanic, Romance, etc.). The focus of this approach is on the receptive skills and the development of comprehension, as the most tangible ways of using the knowledge of a related language to learn a new one.
- *integrated didactic approaches* are based on the principle of “helping learners to establish links between a limited number of languages” (Candelier et al., 2010. p. 8). The goal of this approach is to use the first language (mother tongue or language of schooling) to facilitate the acquisition of a first foreign language, then to use these two languages as the basis for learning a second foreign language, etc. It is also the direction taken by numerous projects exploring the idea of German after English when they are learnt as foreign languages (cf. the studies relating to tertiary language learning, such as Neuner and Hufeisen, 2004).

Pluralistic approaches are crucial if plurilingual and pluricultural education is to succeed.

6. Framework of Reference for Pluralistic Approaches to Languages and Cultures (FREPA)

FREPA is a document published by the European Centre for Modern Languages which presents a list of descriptors related to knowledge, attitudes and skills considered necessary within the plurilingual and intercultural education. Even though there are many theoretical and practical works on pluralistic approaches to languages and cultures, before FREPA there has not been “any reference framework of knowledge, skills and attitudes which could be developed by such pluralistic approaches” (Candelier et al., 2010, p. 12). Therefore, the authors considered it to be very important to create such reference framework because “the lack of a set of descriptors is a serious handicap to the teaching and learning of languages and cultures” (ibid.). FREPA is intended for institutions responsible for curriculum and teaching materials development, as well as for language teachers, and it is an essential tool for the development of curricula (Candelier et al., 2010, pp. 12-13).

As it is stated in the document, “the framework is organized around (...) a table of the global competences on which our ability to act and reflect in a pluralistic context is based and (...) the resources which these competences call upon” (Candelier et al., 2010, p. 25). In the three lists of resources (Knowledge, Attitudes and Skills), a vast number of descriptors is presented, and each of them has a set of sub descriptors related to them. An example of the organization of descriptors and sub descriptors in FREPA is given in Table 1 on the following page.

Table 1: Example of the organization of descriptors and sub descriptors in FREPA (p. 51)

K-6 +++	Knows that there are similarities and differences between languages / linguistic variations
K-6.1. ++	Knows that each language has its own system
K-6.1.1. +++	Knows that the system which makes up one's own language is only one possibility among others
K-6.2. +++	Knows that each language has its own, partly specific, way of °perceiving / organising° reality
K-6.2.1. ++	Knows that the particular way in which each language ° expresses / “organises” ° the world is influenced by culture
K-6.2.2. ++	Knows therefore that in translating from one language to another there is rarely a word for word solution, a simple exchange of labels, but that one should see the process within the context of a different °perception / organisation of reality°
etc.	

7. Aims

The general aim of this study was to determine to what extent Croatian language education policies for primary (grades 1 to 8) and secondary, non-vocational, education (grammar schools) are in accordance with the objectives of the European Union for plurilingual and pluricultural education.

Firstly, the goal was to explore whether the number of foreign languages taught in Croatian primary and grammar schools as compulsory subjects corresponds to the proposed objective of the European Union which states that every adult citizen should be able to use at least two languages, in addition to his or her mother tongue. The assumption was that the study would show that this EU objective was not met in the Croatian education system. In this part of study, the amount of

time allotted to each foreign language taught was noted, and compared with the time given to mother tongue, and furthermore compared with the situation in the vocational schools (3-year and 4-year programmes).

Secondly, the aim was to examine Croatian language education policy documents for primary and grammar schools to determine whether the educational goals noted in them have any similarity with the knowledge, attitudes and skills listed in the Framework of Reference for Pluralistic Approaches to Languages and Cultures. One of the hypotheses was that not many similarities would be found when it comes to plurilingualism, since Croatia is linguistically relatively homogeneous. However, it was assumed that more similarities related to culture, multiculturalism and interculturalism would be found.

8. Procedure

For the first part of the study, the numbers of classes allotted to each language in primary schools (mother tongue, first and second foreign languages) were extracted from the *Nastavni plan i program za osnovnu školu* (Educational plan and programme for primary schools) published by the Croatian Ministry of Science, Education and Sports in 2006. For grammar schools, the numbers of classes were extracted from the current *Nastavni programi za gimnazije* (Educational programmes for grammar schools) published in 1994. When it comes to vocational schools (3-year and 4-year programmes), the numbers of classes were extracted from *Nastavni planovi srednjih strukovnih škola* (Educational plans for vocational schools) published in 1996.

For the second part of this study, The Framework of Reference for Pluralistic Approaches to Languages and Cultures (FREPA) was used to come up with the list of descriptors which are connected with the development of plurilingual and pluricultural competence. In this study, only main descriptors in FREPA were used in making of the lists presented in Tables 5, 6 and 7. List of descriptors of resources in FREPA is divided into three groups: (1) knowledge about language and culture, (2) attitudes towards languages, cultures and the diversity of languages and cultures, and (3) plurilingual and pluricultural skills. The same was done in this study, but the descriptors were

slightly modified to either make them a bit shorter and more general, or for the purpose of consistency of the way they are expressed. These descriptors were then compared with educational goals and expected achievements written in the chapter *Jezično-komunikacijsko područje* (Language and communication area) of the *Nacionalni okvirni kurikulum* (National curriculum) published in 2011.

9. Results

9.1 Number of languages and classes

As it can immediately be seen in Table 2, students are taught only one foreign language as a part of obligatory programme, which suggests that Croatian children are not being prepared to accomplish the objective of the European Union that every adult citizen of the European Union should be able to use two foreign languages in addition to mother tongue. In the first four grades, students have five classes of Croatian (programme of which includes both language and literature) a week, which results in 175 45-minute classes a year. In contrast, they have only two foreign language classes a week (70 classes a year). In the fifth and sixth grade, the time given to first language (language of schooling) stays the same, but the number of foreign language classes is increased to three a week (105 classes a year). In the last two grades, the amount of time allotted to foreign language stays the same, but the number of first language classes decreases to four a week (140 classes a year). At the beginning of the fourth grade, students can choose to learn one additional foreign language.

Table 2: Number of classes per week for primary schools (grades 1 to 8)

	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII
L1	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	4
FL1	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	3
FL2 (optional)	-	-	-	2	2	2	2	2

Legend: L1 – first language (Croatian); FL1 – first foreign language; FL2 – second foreign language; I, II, ..., VIII – grades

When it comes to secondary education in grammar schools, students can learn more than one foreign language (modern or classical), but that does not mean that it is obligatory for all. As it can be seen in Table 3, in all four streams of grammar school (*opća gimnazija* – general stream of grammar school, *jezična gimnazija* – stream of grammar school which focuses on languages, *klasična gimnazija* – stream of grammar school which focuses on classical languages and cultures, and *prirodoslovno-matematička gimnazija* – stream of grammar school which focuses on mathematics, information and communication technology, and science), students have four classes of Croatian a week (140 a year) and learn at least one foreign language during all four years. They also learn Latin for at least two years.

Table 3: Number of classes per week for grammar schools

	O				J				K				P-M			
	I	II	III	IV	I	II	III	IV	I	II	III	IV	I	II	III	IV
L1	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
FL1	3	3	3	3	4	4	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
FL2	2	2	2	2	4	3	3	3	-	-	-	-	2	2	2	2 ²
FFL	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
LAT	2	2	-	-	2	2	-	-	3	3	3	3	2	2	-	-
GR	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	3	3	3	-	-	-	-
FS	-	2	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Legend: L1 – first language (Croatian); FL1 – first foreign language; FL2 – second foreign language; FFL – third foreign language (facultative); LAT – Latin; GR – Greek;

² In *prirodoslovno-matematička gimnazija* students can choose to have additional classes of mathematics or ICT throughout all four years, instead of learning second foreign language

FS – elective or optional course subject (which can be a foreign language); O – opća gimnazija; J – jezična gimnazija; K – klasična gimnazija; P-M – prirodoslovno-matematička gimnazija; I, II, III, IV – grades

In all streams, except for the language stream (jezična gimnazija) with four classes a week (140 a year), students have first foreign language classes three times a week (105 classes a year). All grammar school students, except those attending classical stream (klasična gimnazija), have two obligatory classes of Latin a week (70 classes a year) in the first two years of schooling.

Only students attending general and language streams of grammar school learn a second foreign language as an obligatory subject. In the language stream, the number of classes per week starts with four in the first year (140 classes a year), and decreases to three for the rest of the schooling (105 classes a year), while in the general stream students learn foreign language only two times a week, which results with 70 classes a year. Students in prirodoslovno-matematička gimnazija can learn an additional language, if they have the desire to do so, but can also opt for additional classes of mathematics or information and communication technology instead of a second foreign language. In the programme of the classical stream of grammar school, learning second foreign language is not proposed in the *Nastavni programi za gimnazije*, since this stream focuses on classical languages, and students attending it have three classes of both Latin and Greek a week (105 classes a year each). In the second year, students of the general stream of grammar school have to choose one facultative subject as a part of the obligatory programme, which can be a foreign language. That means that there is a possibility for them to learn three foreign languages in school during their secondary education.

When it comes to vocational schools, the situation is quite different. Out of 390 vocational programmes (149 4-year and 241 3-year programmes), only the students attending one of the 21 4-year programmes and five 3-year programmes learn at least three languages in the course of their schooling, either first language and two foreign languages, or first language, foreign language(s) and Latin. Those vocational programmes are presented in Table 4, and the percentage of vocational programmes offering at least two languages as a part of obligatory subjects, in addition to Croatian, are demonstrated in Figure 1.

Table 4: Vocational programmes which include at least two obligatory foreign languages

	L1	FL1	FL2	FL3	LAT
Administrative secretary	•	•	•		
Administrative clerk	•	•	•		
Hospitality and tourism technician	•	•	•	•	
Maritime sailor	•	•	•		
Fishery nautical technician	•	•	•		
Aeronautical points man	•	•	•		
Forwarding agent	•	•	•		
Agricultural technician – gardener	•	•			•
Chemical technician	•	•			•
Veterinary technician	•	•			•
Nurse	•	•			•
Midwife	•	•			•
Laboratory technician	•	•			•
Pharmacy technician	•	•			
Dental technician	•	•			•
Sanitary technician	•	•			•
Physiotherapy technician	•	•			•
Beautician	•	•			•
Musician	•	•	•		•
Fashion stylist	•	•	•		•
Dancer	•	•	•		
Naval captain	•	•	•		
Ship's cook	•	•	•		
Cook	•	•	•		
Waiter	•	•	•		
Confectioner	•	•	•		

Legend: F1 – first language (Croatian); FL1 – first foreign language; FL2 – second foreign language; FL3 – third foreign language; LAT – Latin; ● – language is taught as an obligatory subject

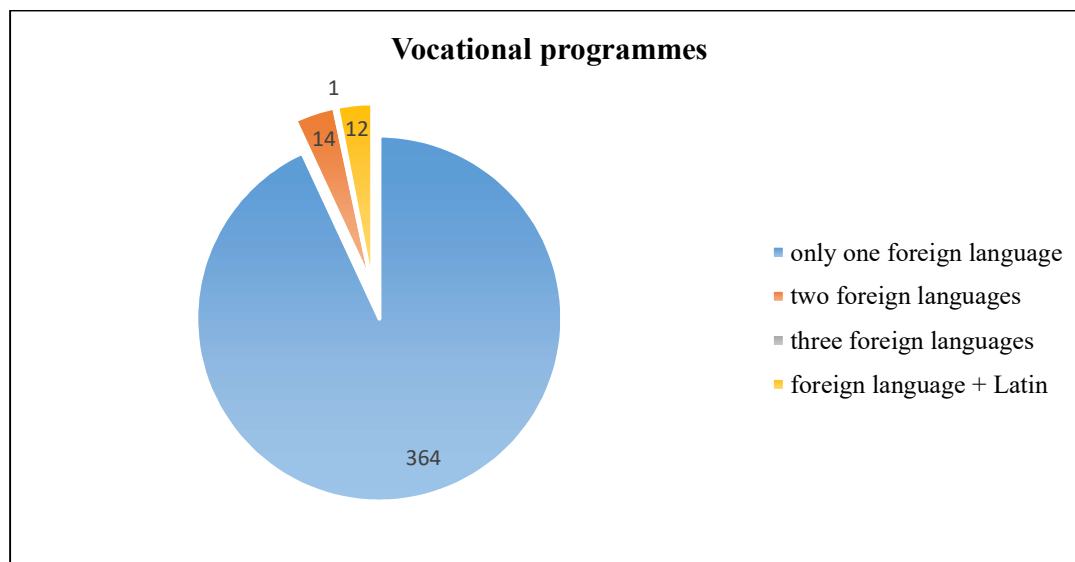


Figure 1: Vocational programmes

9.2. Comparison of descriptors and educational goals

The following three tables (Table 5, Table 6 and Table 7) present lists of descriptors of skills, which are best developed using pluralistic approaches. Development of these resources leads towards the development of students' plurilingual and pluricultural competence, which is the goal of plurilingual education. Descriptors have been divided into three sections: (1) knowledge about language and culture, (2) attitudes towards languages, cultures and the diversity of languages and cultures, and (3) plurilingual and pluricultural skills, and are compared with educational goals or expected achievements in the Croatian education system, i.e. in the tables, it is noted whether certain descriptor has corresponding goal or achievement stated in the chapter *Jezično-komunikacijsko područje* (Language and communication area) in the *Nacionalni okvirni kurikulum* (NOK).

As Common European Framework of Reference for Languages states, “all human communication depends on a shared knowledge of the world” (2011, p. 11) Therefore, it is only appropriate to start with the list of descriptors of knowledge about languages and cultures. If there is a dot (●) after the descriptor, it means that implications of said descriptor were found in the chapter on Language and communication area in the NOK.

From the first look at Table 5, it can be seen that approximately half of the descriptors have more or less corresponding educational goals and expected achievements in the chapter on Language and communication area in the Croatian curriculum. First seven descriptors (1-7) are connected with linguistic aspects, while the remaining ones (8-15) are related to cultural aspects.

When it comes to the knowledge of language as a semiological system, it is expected of students to know some of the principles of how languages work and that they function in accordance with rules and norms: they will understand how language works and master needed linguistic terminology, types of discourse and style (cf. NOK, 55), and orthography rules (cf. NOK, 93), while noting the differences between spoken and written texts. They will also recognize the differences between standard language and different linguistic registers (cf. NOK, 104), which implies that they will possess knowledge about synchronic variations in languages. Students are also expected to know some of the principles of how communication functions – they will become aware of cultural conditionality of communicative patterns (cf. NOK, 105). When it comes to the knowledge of the existence of similarities and differences between languages, hints of it being expected are also found in the NOK: students will note the particularities of pronunciation and intonation of a foreign language (cf. NOK, 80) and master the differences between foreign language and mother tongue in the pronunciation of the sounds and groups of sounds (cf. NOK, 90), and in writing (cf. NOK, 104). Even though plurilingualism and interculturalism are mentioned several times throughout the document, in the NOK it is not explicitly stated that students are expected to acquire knowledge about language diversity, multilingualism and plurilingualism. However, it can be said that students will acquire knowledge of the existence of many languages in the world which use different kinds of sounds and script, but the authors of NOK perhaps considered this knowledge to be a general one, which is not acquired only through language teaching and learning, but also through other subjects, such as geography.

Table 5: Knowledge descriptors

1.	Knowledge of some of the principles of how languages work	●
2.	Knowledge of the role of society in the way languages work / the role of language in the way society works	●
3.	Knowledge of some of the principles of how communication functions	●
4.	Knowledge of the continuous evolution of languages	
5.	Knowledge about language diversity, multilingualism and plurilingualism	
6.	Knowledge of similarities and differences between languages / linguistic variations	●
7.	Knowledge about the ways one acquires / learns language	
8.	Knowledge about what cultures are and how they work	●
9.	Knowledge of the close connection of cultural and social diversity	
10.	Knowledge of the role of culture in intercultural relations and communication	●
11.	Knowledge of the continuous evolution of cultures	●
12.	Knowledge of several phenomena relative to the diversity of cultures	
13.	Knowledge of the existence of resemblances and differences between (sub)cultures	●
14.	Knowledge of the fact that identity is constructed in relation to one or more linguistic / cultural affiliations	
15.	Knowledge about the ways one acquires / learns a culture	

Knowledge about what cultures are is not explicitly stated as an educational goal of the Language and communication area, but students are, perhaps, expected to acquire it through other subjects, such as history, geography and sociology. However, some aspects of it are implied. Students are expected to become aware that diversity is an important characteristic of culture (cf. NOK, 95), to differentiate and explain characteristics of Croatian, their own and other cultures (cf. NOK, 75), and to apply appropriate behavioural patterns in known situations (cf. NOK, 85), which would not be possible without at least some knowledge about how cultures work. They are also expected to become aware of the fact that culture influences behaviours and social practices of people belonging to it (cf. NOK, 95). When it comes to the expected achievements connected with the knowledge about intercultural relations, it is stated that students will become aware of the cultural conditionality of communicative patterns (cf. NOK, 95), and accept the existence of stereotypes and prejudice, as well as the need to overcome them (cf. NOK, 105). Although it is not explicitly stated that students should know strategies for resolving intercultural conflicts, they are expected to apply different strategies which one can use to maintain or restore communication, as well as to avoid and/or overcome misunderstandings, which directly implies that they possess knowledge of them. At the very beginning of the part of the NOK dealing with language and communication area, some indications exist of the possession of cultural references which structure one's knowledge and perception of the world and other cultures. It is stated that, through teaching, learning and acquisition of classical and modern foreign languages and familiarising with their cultures, the picture of the world is being expanded in accordance with general cultural and civil values (cf. NOK, 55). One more achievement stated in the NOK is the knowledge of the continuous evolution of cultures. Students are expected to become aware of the change and development as important characteristics of cultures (cf. NOK, 95), while also acquiring knowledge that modern experience is intertwined with historical cultures (cf. NOK, 110). Taking into consideration all the above, it is logical that students are supposed to be aware that resemblances and differences exist between cultures, but it is, nevertheless, explicitly stated that students are expected to note values of Croatian, their own and other cultures (cf. NOK, 76), as well as to become aware of the existence of similarities and differences between their own culture and the culture of the target language (cf. NOK, 84).

As Common European Framework of Reference for Languages points out, “the communicative activity of users / learners is affected not only by their knowledge, understanding and skills, but also by (...) attitudes, motivations, values [and] beliefs, (...) which affect not only the language users' /learners' roles in communicative acts, but also their ability to learn” (2011, pp. 105-106). The following table (Table 6) lists descriptors of attitudes connected with the development of plurilingual and pluricultural competence, and notes whether there is any implication of these attitudes being expected achievements of students in Croatia.

When it comes to attitudes, first six descriptors in the table (16-21) describe “how subjects are 'directed towards the world', the world of otherness, of diversity (...), they are composed of attitudes to linguistic and cultural diversity” (Candelier et al., 2010, p. 83). Attentiveness (awareness) is not explicitly stated in the National curriculum as an expected outcome of the education of Croatian students. However, it is implied through numerous other educational goals connected with knowledge and skills. If students are expected to know certain aspects of languages and cultures and to use that knowledge in the classroom and out of it, they are certainly aware of those aspects. When it comes to the sensitivity to linguistic and cultural differences and similarities within the same language / culture, as well as between different languages / cultures, some aspects of it are explicitly stated, while others are only implied. For example, students are expected to note the differences between standard language and different variants (cf. NOK, p. 101), as well as similarities and differences between their own culture and the culture of target language (cf. NOK, p. 106). They are also expected to develop curiosity and interest in their own language, culture and literature, as well as in the cultures, literatures and languages of other peoples in Croatia, Europe and the world (cf. NOK, p. 55). One of the aims of teaching foreign languages stated in the NOK is to encourage students to develop interest in the culture of target language (cf. NOK, p. 89) and to try to react with curiosity to foreign and puzzling content, behaviour and situations (cf. NOK, p. 85). Positive acceptance of the differences and values of Croatian and other cultures (cf. NOK, p. 61), as well as openness to the diversity of languages, people and cultures of the world are also emphasized. Students are expected to become aware of the need to act with tolerance and empathy towards people from different cultures, as well as to try to openly react to foreign behaviour, situations and content. When it comes to the respect for other people and cultures, the authors of NOK consider that it is important to develop a regard for the cultures, literatures and languages of peoples in Croatia,

Europe and the world (cf. NOK, p. 55), as well as to adopt humanistic values, such as friendship, cooperation, altruism and tolerance (cf. NOK, p. 104) as a way of developing respect for human dignity and universal human rights.

Table 6: Attitudes descriptors

16.	Attention to "foreign" languages, cultures or persons; to linguistic, cultural or human diversity in the environment; to language in general; to linguistic, cultural or human diversity in general	●
17.	Sensitivity to the existence of other languages, cultures or persons or to the existence of linguistic, cultural or human diversity	●
18.	Curiosity about or interest in "foreign" languages, cultures, persons, in pluricultural contexts, or in linguistic, cultural, human diversity in general (as such)	●
19.	Positive acceptance of linguistic or cultural diversity, of others or of what is different	●
20.	Openness to the diversity of languages, people or cultures of the world, to diversity as such	●
21.	Respect or regard for "foreign" or "different" languages, cultures or persons; for the linguistic, cultural or human diversity	●
22.	Disposition or motivation with respect to linguistic or cultural diversity or plurality	
23.	A wish or a will to be involved or to act in connection with linguistic or cultural diversity or plurality or in a plurilingual or pluricultural environment	
24.	An attitude of critical questioning or a critical position towards language or culture in general	●

25.	The disposition or the will to suspend one's judgement, acquired representations or prejudices	●
26.	Disposition to starting a process of linguistic or cultural decentring or relativizing	
27.	The will or the disposition to adapt; Flexibility	
28.	Having self –confidence	●
29.	A feeling of familiarity	
30.	Assuming one's own (linguistic or cultural) identity	
31.	Sensitivity to experience	●
32.	Motivation to learn languages (e.g. language(s) of schooling, family, foreign or regional language(s) etc.)	●
33.	Attitudes aiming to construct pertinent and informed representations for learning	●

The next two descriptors (22 and 23) are connected with “action in relationship to otherness and diversity” (Candelier et al., 2010, p. 84). They describe motivation or willingness to engage in plurilingual and pluricultural interactions, to take up the challenge of linguistic and cultural diversity, and to learn from others' language and culture. These are not explicitly stated in the NOK.

The following three descriptors (24, 25 and 26) focus on active and critical 'way of being' in relation to language and culture. As it can be seen in the NOK (p. 106), students are expected to express willingness to ask for additional information in order to be able to understand culturally conditioned content. It is also expected that they acknowledge the existence of stereotypes and prejudice towards other languages and cultures and their speakers / members, and develop a will to combat (overcome) them (cf. NOK, p. 105).

The next three descriptors (27, 28 and 29) “focus on psycho-sociological processes in an individual's way of being in the world (in a context of linguistic and cultural plurality)”

(Candelier et al., 2010, p. 85), and include flexibility, self-confidence and a feeling of familiarity. According to NOK, the aim for students in Croatia is to learn to express their own thoughts, emotions, ideas and attitudes, and to properly react during interaction with people in different situations (cf. NOK, p. 55), and at the same time to develop confidence in their own listening, writing, reading and speaking skills (cf. NOK, p. 101-104).

When it comes to assuming one's own cultural and linguistic identity (descriptor 30), i.e. individual's relationship to language and culture, nothing is explicitly stated in the NOK, even though this “is an attitude which is probably essential for coping with plural environments” (Candelier et al., 2010, p. 85).

The last three descriptors (31, 32 and 33) are connected with attitudes to learning and include sensitivity to experience, motivation to learn languages and interest in learning techniques. As it is stated in the NOK, students are expected to apply different individual and co-operative learning strategies and self-assessment (p. 90), to gain confidence and satisfaction with learning and achievements (p. 56) and, finally, to develop interest in the culture of target language (p. 86).

As it can be seen in Table 7, five out of seven listed general skills connected to plurilingual and pluricultural competence have been either explicitly stated or implied by the authors of NOK, even though there is often only a small amount of the aspects mentioned.

Table 7: Skills descriptors

34.	Ability to observe or analyse linguistic elements or cultural phenomena on languages or cultures which are more or less familiar	●
35.	Ability to identify (recognise) linguistic elements or cultural phenomena in languages or cultures which are more or less familiar	●
36.	Ability to compare linguistic or cultural features of different languages or cultures (or, to perceive or establish linguistic or cultural proximity and distance)	●
37.	Ability to talk about or explain certain aspects of one's own language, one's culture, other languages or other cultures	
38.	Ability to use knowledge and skills already mastered in one language in activities of comprehension or production in another language	●
39.	Ability to interact in situations of contact between languages or cultures	●
40.	Ability to appropriate the knowledge of linguistic features or usage or cultural references or behaviours which belong to more or less familiar languages and cultures	

According to NOK, students in Croatia have to be able to observe or analyse linguistic elements and cultural phenomena in different languages and cultures. They are expected to develop the ability to note and recognize explicitly and/or implicitly present culturally conditioned values in communicative situations and sources (p. 106).

When it comes to the students' ability to identify linguistic elements, such as sound forms, written forms, origin of the words, grammatical categories, pragmatic functions and discourse types, it is not explicitly stated in the NOK as one of the students' expected achievements. However, it is common sense that through language learning and acquisition, learner gains knowledge about these elements and develops skills to identify them. It is interesting that, when it comes to the ability to identify certain cultural elements, the authors of

NOK mentioned it in several places throughout the document. It is explicitly stated that students are expected to be able to identify cultural specificities, to note differences and values of Croatian and other cultures (cf. NOK, p. 79), become aware of contradictions and uncertainties in intercultural communication (cf. NOK, p. 105), and recognize stereotypes and prejudices about their own culture and foreign ones (cf. NOK, p. 106). Even though it is not explicitly stated that students should develop the ability to identify specific forms of behaviour linked to certain cultural differences, it is implied, since, according to NOK, students are expected to apply proper behavioural patterns in different situations (cf. NOK, p. 106).

The ability to compare linguistic and cultural features of different languages and cultures is also stated as one of the students' expected achievements, if not explicitly, then implicitly. Students are expected to note the differences between spoken and written texts, as well as the differences in orthography of foreign language and mother tongue (cf. NOK, p. 104), they have to be able to explain the connection of the grammar of their own language, of other foreign languages they are learning, and of classical language (cf. NOK, p. 113), they are expected to identify similarities and differences in the meaning and use of certain expressions and behaviours (cf. NOK, p. 106), and finally, they have to be able to note similarities and differences between their own culture and culture of target language in aspects of everyday life (cf. NOK, p. 106).

When it comes to the ability to transfer knowledge and skills already mastered in one language to another language, it is nowhere explicitly stated, except in the part of the chapter dealing with classical languages. It states that students will note and explain the connection of the grammar of their own language, of other foreign languages they are learning, and of classical languages (cf. NOK, p. 113).

According to NOK, one of the students' expected achievements is the ability to interact in contact between languages and cultures. Students are expected to react flexibly in communication and independently apply different strategies in order to avoid and/or overcome misunderstandings, to ask for additional information in order to understand culturally conditioned content (cf. NOK, p. 106) and to use appropriate behavioural patterns (cf. NOK, p. 101).

The last descriptor in this list deals with learning strategies, or knowledge how to learn. Students are expected to have the ability to reproduce unfamiliar features of a language, i.e. they have to articulate the sounds correctly, use the correct accent in words and phrases and respect the rhythm and intonation (cf. NOK, p. 86). They need to possess the ability of autonomous learning and use bilingual and monolingual dictionaries, and different sources (cf. NOK, p. 102). Students are also expected to manage their learning in a reflective manner – they need to apply a wide range of cognitive, meta-cognitive and socially affective strategies, as well as strategies of co-operative and individual learning, and self-assessment (cf. NOK, p. 101).

10. Discussion

The findings of this study confirmed that the objective of the European Union stating that every adult citizen should be able to use at least two languages in addition to his or her mother tongue is not met in the Croatian education system, at least not through the obligatory programme. Students in primary education start learning an obligatory foreign language at the beginning of their schooling, at the approximate age of six or seven. Even though the obligatory language is not prescribed and it can be chosen among languages taught in a particular school, according to Key Data on Teaching Languages at School in Europe (2012), the majority (90,9%) of students choose to learn English (p. 60). Second foreign language as an obligatory subject is not prescribed in the curriculum, but students are given an opportunity to learn additional language starting in the fourth grade of primary school, at the approximate age of nine or ten, which they can choose from the languages offered in a particular school's programme.

Taking a look at Figure 2, it is apparent that the emphasis is put on the acquisition of mother tongue, which is understandable considering that Croatian is the language of schooling in almost every primary school in Croatia.³ Time given to each of the languages (Croatian, first and second foreign) throughout the entire primary school is presented in Figure 2.

³ Bilingual and international schools are not considered here and their educational programmes are not prescribed at a national level

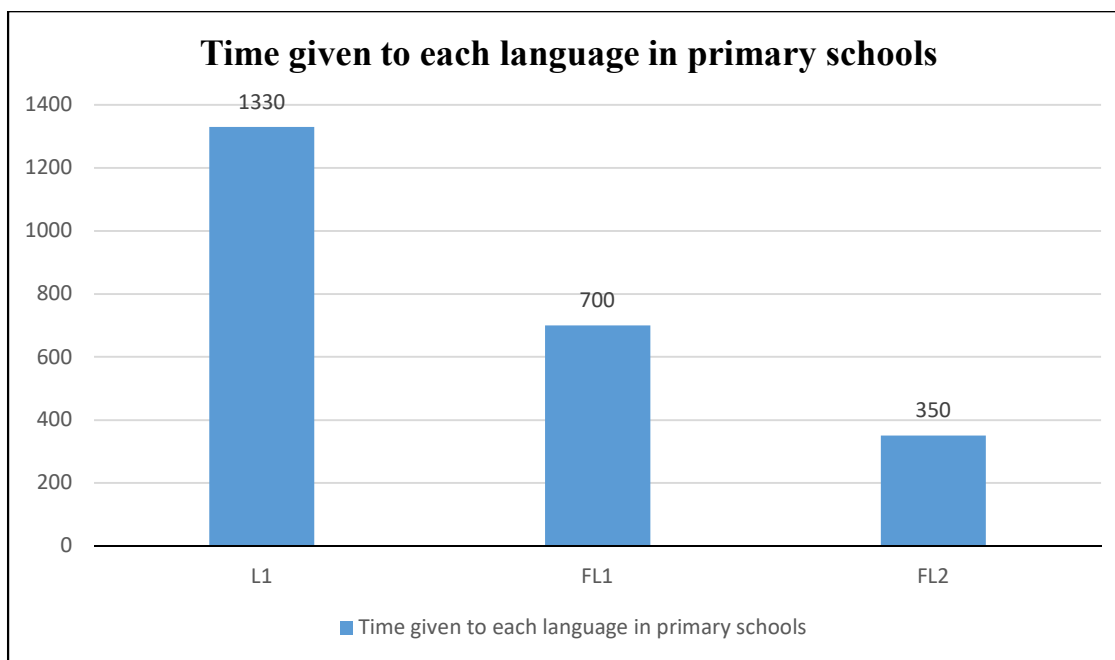


Figure 2: Time given to each language in primary schools

When it comes to secondary education, the difference between grammar and vocational schools is immense. All students of grammar school learn at least two foreign languages in the course of their schooling, either modern or classical. Students attending general and linguistic streams of grammar schools (opća i jezična gimnazija) can even learn four languages, since they are given the opportunity to choose to learn a third foreign language, either as an optional foreign language (language stream) or just as an optional subject (general stream). Even though the students of the classical stream of grammar schools (klasična gimnazija) learn Latin and Greek in addition to the first foreign language and the reasons for the absence of obligatory second foreign language (modern) is somewhat justifiable, one cannot help but wonder whether this gives them the disadvantage in the modern society where the knowledge of modern, 'live' foreign languages is appreciated. When it comes to the stream of grammar school which focuses on mathematics, information and communication technology, and science, students attending it do not have to learn a second foreign language, but can instead opt for additional classes in mathematics or information and communication technology. Although the focus is on the STEM subjects,

knowledge of which is appreciated and ever needed in the time we live in, it seems that the absence of the second obligatory foreign language puts those students at a disadvantage on the market. Not being able to use more than one foreign language lowers their opportunity for mobility and perhaps a better paid job outside of Croatia. Time allotted to each language in each stream of grammar schools during secondary school, and the differences between them are presented in Figure 3.

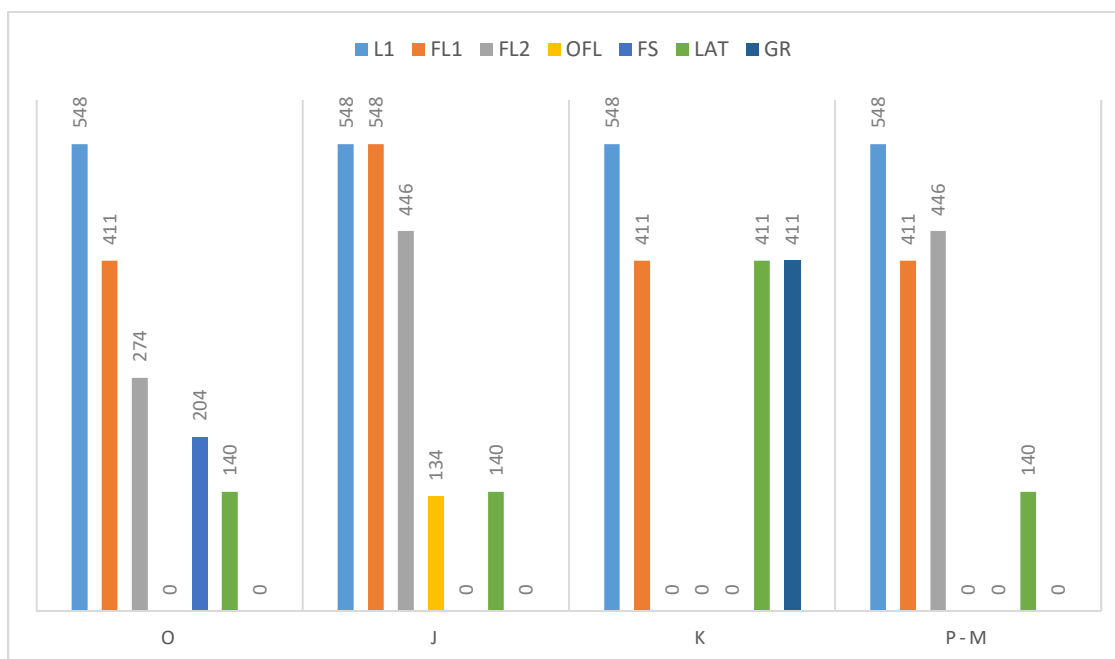


Figure 3: Time given to languages in grammar schools

Legend: L1 – first language (mother tongue); FL1 – first foreign language; FL2 – second foreign language; OFL – optional foreign language; FS – facultative subject; LAT – Latin; GR - Greek

When it comes to vocational schools, the majority of students learn only one foreign language, while those vocational programmes offering two or more obligatory foreign languages do so because of the specificities of the job they are preparing their students for. For example, hospitality and tourism technicians have to be able to use as many languages as possible, since the correspondence and interaction with citizens of foreign countries is one of the major points in their job description. Other examples are the vocations from the fields of agriculture, chemistry,

veterinary medicine and medicine, for which the knowledge of Latin is a requirement, but also vocations such as a cook or a confectioner who need French or German to be able to understand culinary terminology.

The second part of the study confirmed both hypotheses: not many parallels were found between the descriptors, and educational goals and expected achievements in the Croatian education system; and there were more parallels between the descriptors and educational goals related to culture than between those related to language.

The second hypothesis, that bigger compliance between the descriptors and educational goals related to culture than those related to language would be found, was confirmed. The reason for that may be the fact that a large number of ethnic minorities lives in the Republic of Croatia. The possible reason for prioritizing culture may be the wish to educate young people and create individuals which will show more empathy and tolerance towards the different than the previous generations.

Even though from the look at the Tables 5, 6 and 7 it seems that there are numerous parallels, it should be taken into account that the descriptors listed in these Tables are very general and that the criteria for the positive mark (●) on the parallel was the existence of the parallel with at least one sub descriptor in FREPA out of many included under a certain descriptor (for the example of the organisation of the descriptors and sub descriptors in FREPA, see Table 1). For example, in the list related to knowledge of languages and cultures and the diversity of languages and cultures, under the descriptor corresponding to *Knowledge of some of the principles of how communication works*, FREPA lists 13 sub descriptors which include the knowledge of some examples of animal communication and knowledge of the fact that a person possessing knowledge about at least one language or culture may play the role of mediation (p. 49). However, only one of these 13 sub descriptors has a parallel in the NOK – *Knows that culture and identity influence communicative interactions*. Another example can be found in the list related to plurilingual and pluricultural skills. Under the descriptor corresponding to the *Ability to observe or analyse linguistic elements or cultural phenomena in languages or cultures which are more or less familiar*, FREPA lists a large number of sub descriptors (29) which describe skills, some of which are following: *Can analyse sounds in languages little known or not at all*, *Can decipher a text written in an unfamiliar script*, *Can divide compound words into*

their constituents, Can analyse communicative repertoires which are plurilingual etc. (pp. 89-90). However, only one of these sub descriptors has a parallel in the educational goals and expected achievements of students in the Croatian education system – *Can analyse the cultural origin of different aspects of communication* (cf. NOK, p. 106).

It was noticed that almost all descriptors of knowledge, attitudes and skills, which can be described as truly plurilingual or pluricultural, or are directly related to plurilingualism, pluriculturalism and interculturalism, have no corresponding explicitly stated educational goals in the NOK. There are some implications of the plurilingual and pluricultural competence being one of the goals of the language teaching and learning in the Croatian education system. Plurilingual and pluricultural competence is even mentioned at the beginning of the chapter on Language and communication area of the NOK as one of the educational goals (p. 55), but parallels with knowledge, attitudes and skills, which are closely tied to the development of said plurilingual and pluricultural competence are rarely found in the NOK. The reason for that might be the fact that Croatia is linguistically and culturally relatively homogeneous. Even though there is a large number of national minorities in Croatia (22), not many situations exist for the occurrence of a truly plurilingual and intercultural interactions, since their members are dispersed and not many big minority communities exist. Hence, it can be said that there is no real need for these knowledges, attitudes and skills to be explicitly stated in the National curriculum framework.

11. Conclusion

The aim of this study was to see how are languages taught (number of languages and time devoted to them) in the Croatian education system and whether this corresponds with EU objectives; and to explore the similarities between suggestions found in FREPA and attitudes in the Croatian education system regarding knowledge, attitudes and skills which aid the development of plurilingual and pluricultural competence. It was firstly discovered that Croatian students in most schools do not learn two foreign languages (grammar schools and some programmes of vocational school are exceptions), which would be very helpful in meeting the objective of the European Union that every adult citizen should be able to use two foreign languages. Secondly, as it was assumed, some parallels between FREPA and NOK were

discovered, but certainly not many, since Croatia is linguistically and culturally relatively homogeneous. It was also found that there are more parallels between descriptors related to culture than between those related to language. The reason for that may be the fact that culture and teaching culture is emphasized, while language has been taught for so long that the linguistic skills are implied and the authors of the National curriculum perhaps didn't think it was necessary to explicitly state linguistic goals for the Croatian students.

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Sažetak

Cilj ovog rada bio je istražiti pristup jezicima u hrvatskom obrazovnom sustavu (poučavanje jezika u osnovnim i srednjim školama) kako bismo saznali u kojoj se mjeri obrazovni ciljevi vezani uz jezike opisani u hrvatskim nacionalnim dokumentima slažu s ciljevima i standardima Europske unije, prikazanim u službenim dokumentima vijeća Europe poput *Zajedničkog europskog referentnog okvira za jezike (ZEROJ)*, *Referentnog okvira za pluralističke pristupe jezicima i kulturama (FREPA)* ili *Vodiča za razvoj i implementaciju kurikula za višejezično i interkulturalno obrazovanje*, te koliko smo daleko od stvaranja višejezičnog i multikulturalnog društva kakvom Europska unija teži. Također nas je zanimalo postoje li u kurikulu jezično-komunikacijskog područja (Nacionalni okvirni kurikulum) naznake pozitivnih stavova i vještina koje pomažu u razvoju višejezične i međukulturne kompetencije. Došli smo do zaključka da među vještinama opisanim u Nacionalnom okvirnom kurikulumu i FREPA-i nema mnogo podudaranja te da se više podudaranja javlja među vještinama koje su vezane uz kulturu, nego među onima vezanim uz jezik. Također je otkriveno da broj jezika koji se poučavaju kao dio obaveznog programa u osnovnim i srednjim školama ne odgovara ciljevima Europske unije da bi svaki njezin odrasli stanovnik trebao znati barem dva strana jezika.

Ključne riječi: višejezičnost, multikulturalnost, kurikulum